

*Imp. Poetry vol. 1*

ON THE

P R E F E R E N C E

OF

V I R T U E T O G E N I U S.

[PRICE

*2/6*



BRUCE

1/2/69

ON THE

P R E F E R E N C E

OF

V I R T U E

TO

G E N I U S.

A

P O E T I C A L E P I S T L E.

QUO TE COELESTIS SAPIENTIA DUCERET, IRES. HORAT.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL IN THE STRAND.

MDCCCLXXIX.



MODERN

PRINTED FOR J. GARDNER, 10, N. B. ST. N. Y.

TO BE HAD OF



AND IS CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES

P O E M S I N E B I L I T Y

G E N I U S

J. G.

B. L. N. B. ST. N. Y.



ON THE

PREFERENCE

OF

VIRTUE TO GENIUS.

---

\* \*, THE wonder of a venal age,  
Whose gentle manners every heart engage,  
If high concerns permit—my verse attend,  
Decide, with freedom, as becomes a friend,  
Approve if right, condemn wherever wrong,  
So shall thy friendly truth reward the song.

B

Full

Full twice twelve years around the glorious sun,  
Our globe, the earth, her stated course has run,  
Since, musing on the various life of man,  
Searching, in vain, for some consistent plan,  
As in my early walk alone I strayed,  
I thus, at length, implored superior aid.  
Descend, celestial Wisdom, to my breast,  
And calm my thoughts tumultuous into rest ;  
Teach me my duty and myself to know,  
Shew me the path in which I ought to go,  
Left in life's labyrinth I lose my way,  
And wide from happiness and honour stray.

Instant, in Fancy's ear, from Wisdom's throne,  
A voice replied, of sweetly solemn tone ;  
Know, mortal, know, I love the heart sincere,  
And he who seeks me, ever finds me near ;  
And since, with humble mind, you ask my aid,  
Behold I bring the heaven-descended maid,  
My daughter, my companion and my friend,  
To whose tuition all my sons must bend ;

Great

Great is her worth, illustrious her fame,  
Loved by the wise, and VIRTUE is her name.

Silence ensued, when straight before my sight,

Methought I saw, arrayed in robes of light,

A form adorned with more than mortal grace,

With more than mortal beauty in her face,

Where goodness beaming height'ned every charm,

And might a wond'ring world to \* rapture warm.

Her flowing hair, in beauteous order tied,

(Surpassing all the laboured arts of pride,)

Swayed by the breeze, upon her shoulder fell,

The charms of perfect symmetry to swell,

And by its shade a pleasing contrast raised,

While all unite in one celestial blaze.

A radiant spear in her right hand she bore ;

And in her left a shield of burnished ore,

Which (wrought with more than human skill,) displayed

The fair companions of the wond'rous maid,

\* *To rapture.*] Formam ipsam, et tanquam faciem honesti—quæ si oculis  
cerneretur, mirabiles amores (ut ait Plato) excitaret sapientiam. CICERO.



Guides of her actions, sources of her power,  
Her great support in every trying hour.

Lowly I bowed before the heavenly fair,  
When thus she spoke, with mild and graceful air.

It is my joy to see the human-kind  
To Wisdom's ways, the ways of peace, inclined ;  
Often, concealed, I seek the haunts of man,  
Intent on Wisdom's ever gracious plan.

Unknown amid the bustling croud I stand,  
The great, the learned, the gay, the busy band ;  
When shunned by these, I quit the vulgar throng,  
And find my friends the private paths among :

Go, and from such, by close attention, learn,  
Evil from good with wisdom to discern,  
Their approbation to deserve, contend,  
And then in Virtue you behold a friend.

She ceased, but e'er a word I could reply,  
Sudden she vanished in the liquid sky,  
And in her place a gleam alone of light,  
With azure tinged, awhile engaged my sight.

Gazing I stood, with anxious doubt oppress'd,  
 And hope and fear alternate seize my breast,  
 But quickly hope prevails; then dawning joy,  
 And Virtue's beauteous form, my mind employ.  
 Home I return'd, with resolution fraught,  
 With steady views, and energy of thought.  
 Long years where'er her lovely name was known,  
 Where'er she dwelt, and still recorded shone,  
 I sought her friends in every different way,  
 And heard her praise in all her foes could say;  
 Inquired the portraits of her earlier age,  
 Drawn or by Grecian or by Roman sage,  
 By him of Athens, modest still as wife,  
 Him of Stagira, him from Samos' isles,  
 What Epleurus, (once with honour named,  
 For ages much by prejudice defamed,)  
 Or Plato, long by all the world admir'd,  
 Whose emulation Homer's name had fir'd,  
 What he, in eloquence by none excelled,  
 Who Catiline's black conspiracy quelled,

Or that famed slave, of Rome the glory, taught;  
 Or Rome's loved master, great Aurelius, thought:  
 What later sages, not unknown to fame,  
 Whether of infidel or Christian name,  
 Of Virtue and her ways, or taught, or knew;  
 From each some choice, some noble precept drew,  
 Some traces of her heavenly features gained,  
 And distant views of her I loved obtained.  
 And yet, oh shame! to real beauty blind,  
 Seduced by Folly, or to cares confined,  
 Celestial Wisdom's words I oft forgot,  
 And impiously repining at my lot,  
 To cold indifference again returned,  
 When for her heavenly worth I should have burned,  
 But soon again the voice divine I heard,  
 And Virtue then in all her charms appeared,  
 Bid me again consult her ancient friends,  
 Direct my life, like them, to worthy ends,  
 Frequent—(though here oft superstition dwells,  
 Oh were she only found in Romish cells!)

The



The Christian, noblest of the ethic schools,  
 Imbibe the spirit of the MASTER'S rules  
 (Marking, from shackles freed of vulgar creeds,  
 His genuine doctrine and his godlike deeds;)

The illustrious prophet sprung from ancient kings,  
 Whose powerful word still balmy comfort brings  
 Whose life fresh vigour to his doctrine lends,  
 On whom the highest hope of man depends;

Who first in fruitful Palestine was known,  
 Whose perfect morals, ~~his~~, are thy own.

And now she comes in more familiar state,  
 And holds discourses of eternal weight  
 Led on by her, methinks, by her inspired,  
 E'en I to some great action might be fired,

Though mountains, hanging o'er our heads, should shake,  
 And earth should from her deep foundations quake.  
 But ah, how feeble still my powers I find,  
 (Such the slow progress of the human mind,  
 Oft nearly vanquished, e'en in common life,  
 By irksome business, and unworthy strife.

Tell

Tell me, my friend, if Virtue I mistake;  
 For life I prize not but for Virtue's sake;  
 And since pursuits of things without our line,  
 Impede advancement in our grand design,  
 Attend me still while I revenge my choice;  
 And cheer me in my course with friendly voice.  
  
 No more the Muses fabled haunts, I'll rove,  
 The fields of Tempe, on the sacred grove,  
 Where youthful bards first feel Parnassian flame,  
 And sigh, like Cowley, for a deathless name;  
 Where Daphnis sweetly sings his joyous songs,  
 Or chaunts in mournful note his fancied wrongs;  
 Or ranting heroes vaunt their deeds of arms,  
 Their brutal quarrels and dread war's alarms;  
 No more Thalia's wit and festive vein,  
 My heart, in Pleasure's flowery path, detain;  
 Melpomene, with grief and wild amaze,  
 Terror, no more, nor soft compassion raise.  
 No more that art which draws the soul away,  
 In soothing numbers to consume the day,

My

My mind with airy images shall please,  
Nor charm from duty to inglorious ease.

Let GENIUS on affecting tales of woe  
Which from calamities of empires flow,  
Or scenes of private life which touch the heart,  
In chosen words, arranged with Dryden's art;  
Construct a poem beauteous or sublime,  
And rival Grecian bards in modern rhyme;  
Or paint the passing manners of the age;  
With light and shade adorn the envied page;  
And fancy with the charms of truth combine,  
To fill, with glowing thought, the harmonious line—

Me let fair Virtue's nobler efforts move,  
To her I'd sacrifice the Muses love.

If e'er to Fame my secret wish aspired,  
It was for Virtue's sake alone desired;

To offer at her shrine the pleasing praise,  
Her glory and propitious power to raise.

Let me the man revere whose godlike mind,  
In warm affection flows to all his kind;

D

And



And leaving soothing sounds and private aims,  
By ardent deeds his love to man proclaims.

Poets the charms of innocence may trace,

Yet live of noble talents the disgrace; \*

\* *The disgrace.*] Though the observation holds with respect to the votaries of other arts, as well as poetry; the poet has no reason to be offended that he is particularly mentioned. It is only to place the sentiment in its strongest light. For if he, whose province it is to study whatever is most beautiful and excellent, may yet be a bad man; it is likely to be oftener the case with inferior characters of genius.

The thought, however, is not new. Cebes, the philosopher, who (in his picture of human life) places the poet at the head of a respectable list; calls them all, lovers of *false learning*; and allows nothing to be *true learning*, but what leads directly to a wife and virtuous life.——“*ἔτσι διὰ τὸ εὖ ζῆναι, διὰ τὸν γάμον*” *περιβαλεῖν ἀνακαμπήσαντες, τινες ἔστιν; διὰ τὴν ψευδοπαιδείαν, ὅπως, ἡρώς, ἡ περὶ τὴν αἰδέαν, διὰ τὴν ἀληθινὴν παιδείαν συνελθόντες, τινες εὖ ζῆναι καλοῦνται ἑαυτοὶ; διὰ μὲν ποιῆσαι, διὰ ἰσθῆναι, διὰ δὲ ἔργον, διὰ δὲ διδάσκειν, διὰ δὲ μισθῶναι.*” &c. ΚΕΒΗΤΟΣ ΠΙΝΑΞ. He goes on to observe, that ignorance, folly, debauchery, are often their companions; unless, being purified from false opinion, they enter the court of true learning. Yet he allows them their proper merit and use. Quintilian indeed seems to have removed the Orator out of this catalogue, by making it a requisite in his character of a perfect orator, that he should be a good man. This may be just with respect to the *perfect* orator; but that a man may be a great orator without being a good man, will scarce admit of a doubt. I will only detain the reader to observe, that this little book of the philosopher's deserves to be studied by all who wish to form a just estimation of those things which are the great objects of pursuit. It teaches to despise wealth and other external distinctions, in comparison with moral worth; and is calculated to

repreſa

With foul and self degrading vice allied,  
With envy, rancour, lewdness, slander, pride.

The man, whose choice is virtue, bravely scorns  
Above the objects which the world adores.  
His life this useful lesson shall declare ;

*VIRTUE alone deserves man's serious care,  
And though with rank and fashion fools may swell,  
With HER alone \* unsating pleasures dwell.*

But 'tis in vain to VIRTUE we aspire,  
Unless we gain a portion of her fire ;  
Unless for all the good below the skies,  
Our love to GOD, the bounteous author rise,

represents the groundless pride and vanity, as well of the gentleman, as of the scholar, and the man of genius, on account of the boasted elegance and dignity of their pursuits and amusements ; and to lead them to esteem a good man, though in the lowest station of life, as of superior intrinsic dignity to themselves ; unless, animated with some portion of the spirit of Virtue, their pursuits are directed to the good of mankind.

\* *With her alone.*] — Veror, ne cui de te, plus quam tibi, credas ;  
Neve putes alium sapiente bonoque beatum.

HORAT.

The

The great, munificent, almighty friend,  
 And thence, relumed, to man his offspring bend.  
 Then, men as men, as sons of God, we love,  
 And feel the growing flame our bosoms move.

— HIM *she* adores—HIM loves—great source of light,  
 Whose beauty, too extreme for mortal sight,  
 Surpasses all his universe contains,

The awful beauty which through nature reigns ;  
 Which shines diffused, above, below, around,  
 Yet is but shade to his full splendour found.

The power of language must for ever fail,  
 Not thought can his stupendous grandeur scale ;  
 Presumptuously to him the voice we raise,  
 Where reverend silence gives profounder praise.—

From HIM derived in seas of bounty flows  
 The good celestial Virtue's hand bestows ;  
 By his parental fostering power *she* lives ;  
 And justly *she* to him the glory gives ;

To HIM applies for all his children need,

Yet still *she* labours ; and, when called, can bleed.

Thus



Thus her devotion charity inspires,  
And both, uniting, glow with purer fires.

Faithful herself to every sacred trust,

Allike to men of every party just,

Contemptuously she views dishonest art,

A \* or \* \* play his paltry part,

Yet to the race of man her *pity* bends ;

Often the arm of *mercy* she extends ;

And, (save when sharp correction \* may suffice,

To change the foolish heart to good and wise,)

Wherever she sees the traces of a mind,

She still is mild, as merciful and kind ;

\* *And, (save when sharp correction.*] Boëthius, the philosopher, teaches that bad men are not to be hated ; but to be pitied, as we pity those who are afflicted with sickness, and to be treated like them, in order to their recovery. —“ Quos (malos. scil.) non ab iratis sed a propitiis potius, miserrantibus — que accusatoribus ad iudicium, veluti aegros ad medicum, duci oportebat, — ut culpa morbos supplicio rescarent.” And again—“ apud sapientes — nullus odio locus relinquatur. Nam bonos quis nisi stultissimus oderit ? — malos verò odisse ratione caret. Nam si uti corporum languor, ita vitiositas — quidam est quasi morbus animorum ; cum aegros corpore minime dignos — odio, sed potius miseratione judicemus, multo magis non insequendi, sed — miserandi sunt, quorum mentes omni languore atrocior urget, improbitas.” Consol. Phil. lib. iv.

Although, by vice deformed, by passion tost,  
 The sacred Image of the God be lost,  
 Which yet, with lustre, may again revive,  
 And to the glory of its father live.

But should some murderous ruffian of the night,  
 The still abode of innocence affright;

Or, prowling from his den, in face of day,  
 Seek at the price of human blood his prey;

Or should some practiced knave in higher life,

Seduce a daughter, or corrupt a wife;

Or with infernal arts deceive the fair,

Her fond and dying husband's only care;

And wring the hearts of parents, brothers, friends,

To serve low passions and the basest ends;

Although with Chesterfield's famed graces armed,

The smooth-tongued wretch hath often senates charmed;

She can assume of Nemesis the part,

And plant the dagger \* in the villain's heart.

\* *And plant the dagger.*] Where, from the circumstances of the case, neither self-defence, nor the defence of others under our protection, nor the injury done, nor the good of society, require or justify the death of the offender; the dagger may signify that remorse only, which other proper modes of punishment may happily excite in the guilty breast.

Vindictive she may *seem*,—yet truly kind,

It is philanthropy impels her mind ;

'Tis to deter from such inhuman deeds,

When she to punishment severe proceeds ;

Or to awake the pangs of guilt in time,

That deep remorse may expiate the crime ;

No mean revenge did ever yet controul

Virtue's benevolent and noble soul.

And still the stranger and the foe distressed,

The rich afflicted, and the poor oppressed,

(Of name unfulfilled, or of evil fame,)—

Her looks benign, and kind assistance claim,

And though the specious, the designing knave,

(To vice's domination groveling slave,)—

The base dissembler, cunningly, awhile,

Her unsuspicious nature may beguile ;

She soon will dart a more discerning eye,

Reject the artful tale, and spurn the lye.

But not discouraged, though she be deceived,

Her temper is not soured, however grieved ;

Unhurt



Unhurt she bears the mortifying pain,  
Nor suffers true distress to sue in vain.

In PUBLIC SCENES which suit her noble mind,  
Zealous to serve the cause of humankind,  
Virtue in all her majesty will shine,  
And shew her form and origin divine.

She calls her great associates to her aid,  
Men in whose breasts her image is portrayed,  
Her only honour'd friends the truly wise,  
For whom her grateful thanks ascend the skies;  
These join their counsels for the general weal,  
Their strenuous labours and their ardent zeal;  
Harmoniously they move to one great end,  
And glory shall their enterprize attend.

And when contending in the public cause,  
Against the proud contemners of Her laws,  
The wolves and tigers of the human race,  
Their injured country's foes and worst disgrace,  
Selfish promoters of each baneful plan,  
False to the noblest trust reposed in man;

Some

Some scene severe should Wisdom then demand,  
 To check the crimes which sink a drooping land,  
 Again she can dread Nemesis assume  
 Drag forth the traitor to his destined doom,  
 The black betrayer of his sacred trust,  
 The wretch who to a people is unjust;  
 Expose him on the world's unbounded stage,  
 Scorn of the present and the future age:  
 And while, with great designs, her bosom burns,  
 And life, with all its trivial cares, she spurns,  
 The flaming sword of justice nobly wave,  
 And by her righteous vengeance kingdoms save,  
 Then weighing nations in her equal mind,  
 And millions yet unborn of humankind,  
 Again, with ardent zeal, she joins her friends,  
 Again they labour for the noblest ends,  
 To clear the public mind, (in judgment just,)  
 By measures wise, from every dark distrust,  
 Secure, for ages, all the rights of man  
 On wisdom's great, extended, liberal plan,

Order and public happiness restore;  
 And bid the voice of woe be heard no more.  
 These scenes are rare, — but still in various ways,  
 To seek the PUBLIC good is Virtue's praise:  
 And first, in what advances it alone  
 More than the power or splendour of a throne,  
 Prevailing MANNERS claim her earliest care,  
 And will each Solon's chief attention share;  
 Here of the public safety lies the source,  
 To strength and glory here the certain course.  
 An Indian conquest, and a captive king,  
 To guilty hands, ill-fated wealth may bring  
 The noble arch, the villa may arise,  
 The lofty column seem to touch the skies,  
 Sad monuments! if Virtue leaves the land,  
 And vice usurps an uncontroll'd command,  
 No rural worthies left, of middle state,  
 To stem the tide, and awe the vicious great.  
 Trained to the yoke, and bound with servile cords,  
 A fallen race shall bend to tyrant lords,

45670

Or



Or dying freedom, roused, (such Sampson's end,)—  
In one great ruin all this splendour blend.  
This the true statesman knows,—but knows in vain,  
Unless the pest of vice he can refrain,  
And those once valued qualities can raise,  
Which form a people's most exalted praise;  
By which the rising state to manhood grows,  
The dread of tyrants and insidious foes.

Say in what realm the minister is found,  
Who dares to stand on Virtue's sold ground?  
Sworn to a master's arbitrary sway,  
Compelled the royal mandate to obey,  
Subservient to the whim of every hour,  
A pander to the lust of boundless power,  
To make an empire happy never taught,  
How can the good of those he rules be sought?  
Headlong he drives and into ruin goes,  
Blind to the dreadful train of future woes.  
A thousand ensigned slaves await his nod,  
And bow before their patron and their God,

Model

Model the laws according to his will,

And all his fatal purposes fulfil:

Where then shall trust have place, or hope arise?

Where but in Virtue's friends, the good and wise.

Ye truly great—whom not a monarch's love,

Nor flattering smile, to wrong your trust can move

Whose freeborn souls disdain the yoke of slaves;

Despise the frown of power, and arts of knaves;

Whom neither wealth, nor grandeur can allure;

With whom our choicest blessings are secure;

Arise to save, once more, your native land,

And Virtue still on Alfred's realm shall smile,

Ye the despotic rescript can rescind,

And give the cruel edict to the wind,

Repair the honoured paths of old renown,

Transmit our rights to distant ages down.

Recall our armies o'er the Atlantic flood,

(Compelled no more to shed a brother's blood,

Commerce, and antient amity, restore,

While shouts of joy resound from shore to shore.

T H E E N D.

